and the auction assumes a competitive state, resolving the competitive state in accordance with the maximum margins proposed by the competitive bidders.

- --17. The auction method as claimed in claim 16, wherein said competitive state resolving step determines a successful bidder as the bidder having proposed the largest maximum margin.
- --18. The auction method as claimed in claim 17, wherein said maximum margin is the difference between the price acceptable to pay and the desired price.
- --19. The auction method as claimed in claim 16, further comprising the step of:

collecting an amount information on the product to be auctioned from each bidder.

- --20. The auction method as claimed in claim 19, wherein said competitive state resolving step resolves the competitive state using said amount information.
- --21. The auction method as claimed in claim 16, further comprising the step of:

continuing the auction after the competitive state resolving step.

--22. The auction method as claimed in claim 16, wherein said collecting step is performed before the auction starts.

--23. The auction method as claimed in claim 16, further comprising the step of:

if the auction does not assume a competitive state, determining a successful bidder as the bidder having proposed the highest desired price.

--24. An auction apparatus for performing an auction, the apparatus connected to a plurality of bidder terminals via a network, comprising:

means for providing information on a product to be auctioned via the network;

means for collecting a desired price for the product and a maximum margin of the price acceptable to pay proposed by each bidder via the network; and

means, if the desired price proposed by one of the bidders coincides with the desired price proposed by another bidder and the auction assumes a competitive state, for resolving the competitive state in accordance with the maximum margins proposed by the dompetitive bidders.



The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 24, wherein said competitive state resolving means determines a successful bidder as the bidder having proposed the largest maximum margin.

--26. The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 25, wherein said maximum margin is the difference between the price acceptable to pay and the desired price.

The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 24, --27. further comprising:

means for collecting an amount information on the product to be auctioned from each bidder.

- The auction method as claimed in claim 27, wherein said competitive state resolving means resolves the competitive state using said amount information.
- The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 23, further comprising:

means for continuing the auction after said competitive state resolves.

The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 23, wherein collection by said collecting means is performed before the auction starts.

--31. The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 23, further comprising:

means, if the auction does not assume a competitive state, for determining a successful bidder as the bidder having proposed the highest desired price.

--32. An auction apparatus for performing an auction, the apparatus connected to a plurality of bidder terminals via a network, comprising:

a storage device storing a program; and

a processor, connected to said storage device, executing the following steps according to the program:

providing information on a product to be auctioned via the network

collecting a desired price for the product and a maximum margin of the price acceptable to pay proposed by each bidder via the network; and

if the desired price proposed by one of the bidders coincides with the desired price proposed by another bidder and the auction assmues a competitive state, resolving the competitive state in accordance with the maximum margins proposed by the competitive bidders.